Iranians continuously claimed progress in increasingly general areas along the front. Gradually, these claims shifted to claims of destruction of things and soldiers, although the shrillness of the language changed not at all. Then came a shift to the successful repulse of Iraqi counterattacks. It became evident that the offensive had failed and failed badly, but it took careful reading to detect. Likewise, it took considerable cross checking to determine what actually happened during Iraq's final offensive, April through August 1988, to understand that the Iranian military forces had been almost totally destroyed. Along with their total destruction came the usual charges of massive use of chemical weapons. Very quickly after the event there appeared several sober western analyses that concluded that the "chemical solution" being offered by Tehran and most journalists was silly. The force ratios were such that chemicals would only have clogged a very efficiently run operation. None of this has a place in Hiro's analysis. All these criticisms aside, and there are other faults as well, this is a valuable book that deserves to be read. Hiro has managed to keep a very fair balance between his portrayals of the adversaries and, more than that, presents what appears to be a credible interpretation of the political processes at work. He clearly has a good understanding of the regional politics which are often lost to western audiences. The other benefit of the book is that it covers almost every relevant event to one degree or another. It is an easy read and broadly informative, but should not be relied upon as authoritative.

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Vertzberger, Yaacov Y.I. *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.

The World in Their Minds, by Yaacov Vertzberger, contains an incredibly thorough review of psychological and political psychological studies of information processing and resulting patterns of political decisionmaking. Each chapter explores a different set of factors affecting the use of information. Together they add up to a complete review of psychological, organizational and societal variables that impact the interpretation of the political environment. The book begins with an insightful evaluation of the current condition of international decisionmaking studies. It then proceeds to chapters on the nature of information, psychological characteristics of political decisionmakers, bureaucratic and organizational factors, and societal influences on decisionmaking. The last two chapters evaluate decisionmakers' use of the lessons of history and possible policy implications. Throughout the book the American experience in Vietnam and the Israeli experience in the

Middle East conflict are used to illustrate the information processing patterns. Terms and patterns are carefully defined, described and discussed. Vertzberger is not at all hesitant to cross levels of analysis and rejects the idea that information processing can be understood by focusing on only one set of factors. The book is a virtual encyclopedia of what is known or suspected about political information processing.

The author clearly faced a choice at the outset of this project; whether to present the rich detail of human information processing or to try to construct a more rigorous model from which testable hypotheses are drawn. He chose the former and the resulting thorough examination of everything from the impact of aging and drugs to the effects of cultural constraints on decisionmakers is certainly the greatest value and contribution of this book. However, a price was also paid in making this choice. Often the author engages too much in review, too little in critical explanation and integration. Patterns of information processing are discussed in minute detail while the concepts that explain those patterns are not examined with equal care. Thus concepts that are virtually interchangeable (eg. psychological theories, images, categories, schemas, proto-rules and orientation-preference cues) are treated as separate factors explaining distinct processes. A more critical approach would question whether or not these are essentially similar concepts used to describe one dominant process: people see what they expect to see. The minute variations in meanings of these concepts reflect lack of unity in the field of political psychology more than they do unique complementary explanatory variables. They reinvent the same wheel. Moreover, those concepts and patterns of information processing that really are distinct should be integrated so that we know when each is likely to operate and what the relationship is of one pattern to another. Do some dominate? For example, Chapter Three contains a detailed discussion of beliefs, values, attitudes and stereotypes. As they are described, they are very much the same thing. Values, for instance, are beliefs about certain things. Stereotypes are also beliefs. Attitudes are described as smaller beliefs. Moreover, their impacts on information processing is essentially the same. Why introduce each as a different concept unless the difference is important, and if it is important, the author should explain how. One could assume, for example that values have priority over ordinary beliefs. But do stereotypes have priority over values in influencing information processing?

How important is it that we know all those minute details about the use of information? In the absence of an analytical framework that pulls the details together, explains when we can expect one information processing pattern to occur and when one gives way to another and produces testable hypotheses it is impossible to tell. In this book, pattern after pattern is illustrated through examples from the Middle East and Vietnam. But no entire case is explained, no hypotheses are presented or tested. Do all the details help us predict behavior or could we just stop with the understanding that people see what they expect to see and make predictions and test hypotheses on that basis? Without tested hypotheses, one cannot tell.

To some extent, the lack of integration and the absence of an explanatory framework is a result of a choice between richness and rigor. But it is also in part a result of the distinction the author makes between misperception and some, unspecified, accurate perception. This creates a strong impact on the entire approach to information processing in this book in that it is based on the idea that there is a reality and that, ultimately, rationality exists and can prevail, if we'd just stop making mistakes. The author does acknowledge that this position requires that the analyst assume he/she can determine what is accurate and an objective interpretation of data, but he casts the concern aside by announcing that we are engaged in a soft science. But the impact is really much larger; it justifies treating multiple patterns as distinct even if they are not, and leaving them unintegrated, even if they should be, because they are all mistakes, misperceptions that have an impact on behavior but that could theoretically be if not eliminated, at least controlled and minimized, one by one. Vertzberger anticipates and defends against this criticism by saying that examining history lets people learn from past mistakes. But given the multiple psychological and informational characteristics described in this book, it is highly unlikely that those exact conditions will be repeated again, hence the mistakes may well teach us little.

The World in Their Minds is certainly worth having in one's library. It is a useful review with a wealth of detail on information processing. It does not present new findings and it does not address the difficult tasks of providing order and coherence to the literature it reviews. The author should not be criticized for choosing to take this path and the book's value lies in the choice made. At the same time, the costs are plentiful.

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